

Psalm 59

Intro

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We just finished the book of Colossians last week and in between our larger studies we like to examine a Psalm or two.

Today we'll examine Psalm 59.

It's one of the easiest Psalms to understand the historical context for, because the author clearly lays it out, and we can reference it in 1 Samuel 19.

This is our outline for today.

- Review of Psalms
- Overview of Psalm 59
- Read 1 Samuel 19 (context of Psalm 59)
- Read/discuss Psalm 59

However, before we cover the text itself, we have to...REVIEW!

If we review this information enough times, it will stick in your minds and it will no longer be "reviewing" what we covered, but rather acknowledging what you already know! That's my goal anyway.

Review of Psalms

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The Psalms are a collection of prayers, poems, and hymns that focus our thoughts on God.

Organization

It was originally compiled into 5 separate books that are **very loosely** organized by theme.

	Chapters	General Theme
Book 1	1 - 41	Lord <u>beside</u> us, in times of trouble.
Book 2	42 - 72	Lord <u>before</u> us, carrying out judgement on His enemies.
Book 3	73 - 89	Lord <u>around</u> us, faithful to His people throughout generations.
Book 4	90 - 106	Lord <u>above</u> us, He is worthy of our praise.
Book 5	107 - 150	Lord <u>among</u> us, in His temple with His people.

Psalms 59 is another nice Psalm, in that it cleanly falls into the general theme of book 2, of the Lord as the Righteous Judge against His enemies.

Contributors

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A handful of authors contributed to the Psalms, with David credited with about half of them and the rest divided between a few other authors over the span of several hundred years.

	How Many	Who?
King David	72	Shepherd, poet, musician, greatest Israelite king (until Christ)
King Solomon	2	David's son and heir, possessed supernatural wisdom
Moses	1	Giver of the Law to the Jews
Family of Asaph	12	David's worship leader and descendants, including during the rebuilding of the wall/temple (1 Ch 25:1; Neh 7:44; 12:46-47)
Sons of Korah (1 with Heman)	12	Korah rebelled against Moses and was swallowed by the earth; his children were not (Num. 26:11)
Ethan the Ezrahite (brother of Heman)	1	Known as a very wise Israelite; so wise, in fact, that the OT specifically tells us that Solomon was wiser than him (1 Kings 4:31)
Unknown authors	50	

Genre

Psalms consist of different types of poetic literature, which are generalized into 3 main genres:

- **Laments:** life's circumstances don't match up with God's promises, psalmist cries out to God and "reminds" God to be faithful.
- **Thanksgivings:** typically thanking God for being faithful (often a mirror perspective of a lament).

- **Praises:** God is awesome, here's some reasons why.

This is by no means the most detailed breakdown of Psalms, but it's adequate for our purposes.

As we read Psalm 59 today, we'll see if we can properly categorize it into one of our general categories. I'll give you a hint: it's not necessarily a "happy" Psalm :)D

Overview of Psalm 59

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Authorship

If you look at the superscript for the Psalm, which is the text before verse 1 that is often italicized in many of your Bibles, you'll see that David is the author of this Psalm.

You'll also notice that this Psalm was probably meant to be sung, and David gives the music that the Psalm should go with.

Unfortunately that music is lost to us, and I couldn't find any traditional Jewish music that sounded like a good replacement, so we'll just have to use our imaginations.

Dating

Now a critical reading of the superscript also reveals some additional information that you may not notice if you glance over it quickly.

Notice it's written by David "for the director of music". During the events of this Psalm, David was an outlaw from the Israelite government led by King Saul, so David didn't have a "director of music" to send his writings to.

That leads us to conclude that this Psalm was written years after the events themselves, when David was king and had a director of music to send his songs to.

That means this Psalm was most likely written during David's reign between **1010 - 970 BC**.

This Psalm is thus a reflection from David on past events in his life. That means David knew the outcome of the events in this Psalm, so keep that in mind as well when we read it.

Outline

A brief outline of this Psalm would be:

- Prayer for deliverance (1-2)
- Proud arrogance of David's enemies (3-7)
- David's confidence in God (8-10)
- Defeat enemies to glorify God (11-13)
- Praising God in spite of relentless enemies (14-17)

Read: 1 Samuel 19 (historical context)

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We're very fortunate that with this Psalm David gives us the exact historical context: King Saul sent men to David's house to literally wait and assassinate him.

With a specific event like that, we have to wonder if there are other passages in the Bible to reference this, and indeed there are!

We're going to start our class today by reading 1 Samuel 19 to set the stage. At the time of 1 Samuel 19, Saul is still king but David has been selected and anointed by God as the successor, so Saul knows his monarchy ends with himself.

In the previous chapter (1 Samuel 18) we see that David is a successful officer in Saul's military, and Saul's daughter, Michal, loves David. Saul tries to use this romance to his benefit and tries to get David killed in battle, but David lives and marries Michal.

This just angers Saul even more, that his worst enemy and the successor to his throne is now his son-in-law.

1 Samuel 19:1-18	
1	Saul told his son Jonathan and all the attendants to kill David. But Jonathan had taken a great liking to David
2	and warned him, "My father Saul is looking for a chance to kill you. Be on your guard tomorrow morning; go into hiding and stay there.
3	I will go out and stand with my father in the field where you are. I'll speak to him about you and will tell you what I find out."
4	Jonathan spoke well of David to Saul his father and said to him, "Let not the king do wrong to his servant David; he has not wronged you, and what he has done has benefited you greatly.

5	He took his life in his hands when he killed the Philistine. The Lord won a great victory for all Israel, and you saw it and were glad. Why then would you do wrong to an innocent man like David by killing him for no reason?"
6	Saul listened to Jonathan and took this oath: "As surely as the Lord lives, David will not be put to death."
7	So Jonathan called David and told him the whole conversation. He brought him to Saul, and David was with Saul as before.
8	Once more war broke out, and David went out and fought the Philistines. He struck them with such force that they fled before him.
9	But an evil spirit from the Lord came on Saul as he was sitting in his house with his spear in his hand. While David was playing the lyre,
10	Saul tried to pin him to the wall with his spear, but David eluded him as Saul drove the spear into the wall. That night David made good his escape.
11	Saul sent men to David's house to watch it and to kill him in the morning. But Michal, David's wife, warned him, "If you don't run for your life tonight, tomorrow you'll be killed."
12	So Michal let David down through a window, and he fled and escaped.
13	Then Michal took an idol and laid it on the bed, covering it with a garment and putting some goats' hair at the head.
14	When Saul sent the men to capture David, Michal said, "He is ill."
15	Then Saul sent the men back to see David and told them, "Bring him up to me in his bed so that I may kill him."
16	But when the men entered, there was the idol in the bed, and at the head was some goats' hair.
17	Saul said to Michal, "Why did you deceive me like this and send my enemy away so that he escaped?" Michal told him, "He said to me, 'Let me get away. Why should I kill you?'"
18	When David had fled and made his escape, he went to Samuel at Ramah and told him all that Saul had done to him. Then he and Samuel went to Naioth and stayed there.

We'll stop there, as the rest of the chapter doesn't necessarily relate to what we're covering today with Psalm 59.

Read/discuss: Psalm 59

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Now we're ready to read Psalm 59. We'll break it up into the 5 outlined sections.

Prayer for deliverance (1-2)

	Psalm 59:1-2
1	Deliver me from my enemies, O God; be my fortress against those who are attacking me.
2	Deliver me from evildoers and save me from those who are after my blood.

As we covered in the background section, David is speaking very literally here, there's no analogy: there are literally men outside his house trying to kill him.

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Proud arrogance of David's enemies (3-7)

	Psalm 59:3-7
3	See how they lie in wait for me! Fierce men conspire against me for no offense or sin of mine, Lord.
4	I have done no wrong, yet they are ready to attack me. Arise to help me; look on my plight!
5	You, Lord God Almighty, you who are the God of Israel, rouse yourself to punish all the nations; show no mercy to wicked traitors.
6	They return at evening, snarling like dogs, and prowl about the city.
7	See what they spew from their mouths—the words from their lips are sharp as swords, and they think, “Who can hear us?”

Keep in mind that during this time and culture, dogs were not “man’s best friend”, but were often scavengers, similar to how we would view vultures, so not in a very positive light.

Discussion Questions:

1. David believes he is innocent, and that ties into his “defense plea” for God. However, we know that David later committed murder, adultery, a mass coverup, and banditry. He has killed many “innocent” people, and this Psalm was written after those events. Why do you think David has a right to call on God and ask for His protection? Could other “innocent” people have written this Psalm with David as the evil person?
2. David uses 3 different references to God in v3. Do you think there’s any significance to using multiple names, especially considering that Psalms is poetic literature?
 - a. Lord (*Yahweh*): covenant God of Israel (mercy)
 - b. God Almighty “God of Hosts” (*Elohim Sabaoth*): commander of heavenly armies (defense)
 - c. God of Israel (*Elohi Israel*): God of His chosen people (strength)
3. Even though this instance is focused on an individual, what does David keep in mind in v5, and why does that matter?

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David's confidence in God (8-10)

	Psalm 59:8-10
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8	But you laugh at them, Lord; you scoff at all those nations.
9	You are my strength, I watch for you; you, God, are my fortress,
10	my God on whom I can rely. God will go before me and will let me gloat over those who slander me.

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Defeat enemies to glorify God (11-13)

	Psalm 59:11-13
11	But do not kill them, Lord our shield, or my people will forget. In your might uproot them and bring them down.
12	For the sins of their mouths, for the words of their lips, let them be caught in their pride. For the curses and lies they utter,
13	consume them in your wrath, consume them till they are no more. Then it will be known to the ends of the earth that God rules over Jacob.

Discussion Questions:

1. Why does David want God to defeat his enemies but not kill them?
2. Does David contradict himself in v11 and v13 where he asks to keep them alive and then asks God to completely consume them?

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Praising God in spite of relentless enemies (14-17)

	Psalm 59:14-17
14	They return at evening, snarling like dogs, and prowl about the city.
15	They wander about for food and howl if not satisfied.
16	But I will sing of your strength, in the morning I will sing of your love; for you are my fortress, my refuge in times of trouble.
17	You are my strength, I sing praise to you; you, God, are my fortress, my God on whom I can rely.

Discussion Questions:

1. After these events, David is on the run as an outlaw for 10-15 years, running for his life. Keeping in mind that David knew all this when he wrote this Psalm, what is significant that David reflects on starting his period of his life praising God for his strength and love?
2. Read 2 Samuel 1:17-19. King Saul and his son Jonathan both die in battle and David writes a song to commemorate them. This was the end of David's years of exile and the

beginning of his monarchy. What is noteworthy about his response to the death of his enemy, and how does it relate to the beginning of his exile here in Psalm 59?

	2 Samuel 1:17-19
17	David took up this lament concerning Saul and his son Jonathan,
18	and he ordered that the people of Judah be taught this lament of the bow (it is written in the Book of Jashar):
19	"A gazelle lies slain on your heights, Israel. How the mighty have fallen!..."

Note: The "Book of Jashar" ("book of the righteous one") is a lost Hebrew book that is referenced in Joshua 10:13 and 2 Sam. 1:18.

- It most likely was a song book that recorded the deeds of great warriors.
- The modern "Book of Jashar" was claimed to have been discovered in the 1800s in the ruins of the Jerusalem temple.
- The current book is most likely not the same as the ancient Hebrew book; it is believed the original Book of Jashar is lost to us today.